

Soldier takes top honors at NCO school

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Matthew A. Butler

CAMP LEMONIER, Djibouti - The second ever Marine Corps Corporal's Leadership Course, 2-04, concluded here May 26 with a graduation ceremony that honored an Army soldier as its top student.

Army Spc. Stephen M. Kuehn, from the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, "The Old Guard," Bravo Co., who is supporting anti-terrorism missions throughout the Horn of Africa, was the class's honor graduate based on his scores from the testable military knowledge and leadership subjects he learned during the 17-day intensive course.

Marine instructors from both U.S. Marine Forces-Djibouti and Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa organized and conducted the course. Seven soldiers and 10 Marines rounded out the class that was open to any senior lance corporal or corporal and the interservice member equivalent stationed here.

The course was scheduled during the morning hours from about 5:30 a.m. to noon most days except Fridays and Sundays when the class started in the afternoon and finished in the evening.

The course placed an emphasis on leadership development through a curriculum focusing on military and battle studies. Students performed close order drill with the Marine Corps non-commissioned officer sword and learned how to conduct hip pocket or impromptu training and studied Marine Corps history. They were subject to uniform inspections, tested with performance driven evaluations and given three written exams.

Because the course's purpose is to prepare Marine Corps corporals with the education and leadership skills necessary to lead Marines in combat, the students and instructors think there is no better place to train than in a deployed combat environment.

Corporal's course students were still required to maintain their duties with their respective units and sections, finding time outside of the workday and class time to practice drill and study for tests. The senior leadership supported this because the sacrifice each section made has and will pay off in the long run for both Marines and soldiers who gained more knowledge and confidence with the instruction.



(Above) Gunnery Sgt. Stephanie Servis, staff noncommissioned officer in charge of the Corporal's Leadership Course, grades Lance Cpl. Brian Zuniga, from 3rd Platoon, who leads a group of fellow students during the sword and drill manual graded exercise. (Below) Servis briefs Zuniga after he completed the drill card while Marine instructor and 3rd Platoon student advisor, Sgt. Kenneth S. Stowell, listens to what she said. (Left) Marine Staff Sgt. Paul Strickland, 1st Squad student advisor, evaluates Spc. Kenneth Kuehn, the class honor graduate, on his "joke on the bunk" inspection.



"I don't think that the environment should matter.

I think if you've got the time you should just do it, no matter what, because you can't stop the training because of your situation," said Gunnery Sgt. Stephanie Servis, the course's staff noncommissioned officer in charge and the Marine who heads up the class from the beginning.

Her training philosophy is simple. "I want to train corporals and make them better leaders and to give them more knowledge than they came here with,"

said Servis, a Flagstaff, Ariz. native.

Her students share that enthusiasm to learn and share their knowledge with other Marines.

See Leadership Page 5

The Horn Courier



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Photo by Cpl. Adam C. Schnell

A French commando sniper discusses the capabilities and uses of the Ultima Ratio Commando II sniper rifle with Marines from Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment here May 31. The sniper rifle, used mainly by French policemen, is one of many weapons the Marines had the opportunity to fire with their coalition partners from France.

Table of Content

News.....Page 2-6

Chapel Schedule.....Page 7

Troop of the Week.....Page 8

MWR Events.....Page 8